

OHR BiH Media Round-up, 11/10/2002

Print Media Headlines

Oslobodjenje; Bin Laden finances Al-Qaida from Sarajevo

Dnevni Avaz: SDA offering coalition of strongest parties

Glas Srpski: RS Treasury: Income better than planned; Dramatic afternoon in Banja Luka primary School "Ivo Andric": first grade pupil jumps from the second floor

Nezavisne Novine: Political parties support measures for acceleration of reforms in BiH: Paddy Ashdown's proposal – a test for new authorities; Wolfgang Petritsch on BiH elections: Voters disappointed with slow reforms; Attack of suicide bomber in Tel Aviv: two people killed, 16 wounded

Blic: 26 millions earned through the privatisation; 150,000 refugees to return to BiH by the end of the year; Ivanic: I'm not for introducing VAT at BiH level; Nicholl: BiH will not bankrupt as some claim

Vecernji List: Will electoral rigging take place: Losers deciding about authority too?

Dnevni List: Lack of vaccines for children in BiH: For vaccines to Croatia

Slobodna Dalmacija: Two Croatian citizens, former "Merceprians" in Mostar prison for a week already: Mikola and Smuk collecting "racquet" in Herzegovina

Slobodna Bosna: You vote, now be hungry! (message to BiH citizens)

BH Dani: Following the election failure – Who will be saving SDP from its president (Zlatko Lagumdžija)

Elections/Reactions

In a statement for **Dnevni Avaz** (front page), the head of the SDA Election HQ, **Hasan Muratovic**, said that the SDA will enter a coalition only with political parties which are accepted by the International Community. *"It is of crucial importance for*

us to have functional governments on entity and state level, governments made up of strongest parties which will be able to cooperate. We are not willing to form a coalition on entity or cantonal levels with parties which will not be allied with us at the state level. There is a great danger of losing four years if we fail to create a consistent authority which will be able to cooperate efficiently on all levels."

At a press conference in Banja Luka, the vice president of the **SNSD, Krstan Simic**, said that this party has not turned down the SDS offer for the creation of the so-called Alliance for the RS, and added that the SNSD will propose a platform "Partnership for reforms". *"SNSD is ready to take responsibility for participation in the executive authority in the RS, but also at the level of BiH."* (**Dnevni Avaz** p 4)

Dnevni Avaz (p 4) reports that immediately after the announcement of the final preliminary elections results, Russian Ambassador to BiH **Alexandar Grischenko** (sp) initiated a lobbying action for the formation of a new Alliance of sorts at the state level *"in order to save Zlatko Lagumdžija and install him to a post in the Council of Ministers."* According to the daily, he is generously helped in this effort by the head of the Federation Security Service, **Munir Alibabic**, and the editor-in-chief of Slobodna Bosna, **Senad Avdic**, *"who are known for being openly against everything that is Bosniak."*

Vecernji List (front and page 3, by Zoran Kresic) and **Jutarnji List** (page 11, by Snjezana Pavic) speculate on possible election engineering and say that in spite of possible artificial revival of 'Alijansa', an SDA-HDZ coalition will have a majority in the Parliament of Federation of BiH. According to VL's sources, members of the BiH Election Commission were not quite sure how to calculate so called 'compensatory' mandates, either to take threshold of 3% on territory of Federation or in each constituency. The dailies report on appeal that HDZ-HD-HNZ coalition sent to Election Commission, that was also delivered to **Paddy Ashdown**, the High Representative and Peace Implementation Council, in which the

Coalition complains about possible misinterpretation of calculation of 'compensatory' mandates. The Coalition in its appeal warns that by not respecting the election threshold, People's Party Working for Prosperity (Lijanovici) with 2,53 % or NHI with 2,08 % of votes would become parliamentary parties. The author of the article in VL says that in case of not respecting the will of voters, possibility of paralysis of government at two levels would be opened.

Dnevni List (page 11) carries a statement by **Lidija Korac**, the President of the Election Commission of BiH: *"The election threshold is defined in the Election Law and does not allow any other interpretations, neither extensive, nor linguistic. The election threshold of 3 % must be passed in a constituency, (regarding) compensation mandates, the Election Law in its article 9.7. does not mention constituency but the distribution of the compensatory mandates is linked to the territory of the entity, meaning those are two separate articles"*.

In an editorial in **Oslobodjenje**, Zija Dizdarevic argues that the elections results in BiH point out to all the problems originating in the Dayton structure of BiH, which favor ethnic division of the country. Dizdarevic also accuses Paddy Ashdown of not paying a great deal of attention to the issue of refugee return.

In a separate editorial in **Oslobodjenje**, Hamza Baksic writes that "Ashdown interpreted the success of the nationalist parties in a very courteous manner." *"However, this renaming of nationalism will not curb or change it. The best litmus test will be his measures and the deadline. So, let's see if these parties will – third time luck – be able to take us to some more peaceful waters, Or, they will in the new era of Kalinic, be an alibi for one another."*

Commenting on the outcome of the BiH elections, the former High Representative, **Wolfgang Petritsch**, stated that results

of the elections reflect dissatisfaction of the people with the results achieved by the Government. In Petritsch's view, the low turn out is the basic argument against the politics of the current authorities. (**Glas Srpski**, p 4, **Nezavisne Novine**, p 2, **BHTV 1**, **FTV**, **SENSE**)

Dnevni List (page 3, by Ivica Mlivoncic) writes that "analysts are seeking after reasons of the election defeat of Alliance for Changes. Some analysts are pointing finger at points of their inefficiency, but nobody asks as to what it did regarding equality of peoples and its citizens. It is a special issue to see, what 'Alliance' missed to do in promoting confessional equality and religious freedoms. Even during two years of Alliance's rule in Federation BiH, the Catholic Church was complaining about a bad position of their believers", the author wrote.

Danko Plevnik in his editorial in **Slobodna Dalmacija** (page 11) analyses results of the BiH elections. "The fundamental question is: Can individual reforms be optimally implemented without decision to radically reform Dayton structure or Republika Srpska, which is permanent generator of revival of exclusive ethnically based care. After a consistent care of the International Community on building of ' a Bosnian society', (...) nothing else will be like before, except maybe, SDS that has not lost charisma of Karadzic. SDA and HDZ are not what they were at the beginning of 90's. Political lessons are learned and OHR-produced mechanisms are preventing them from abuse of government, what they did before. (...) These elections were marked with big return of **Hasan Muratovic**, ex-Prime Minister and pragmatic person. He was the one to throw out rightists in the party from the election campaign, and sent signals that SDA will play coalition poker by reform principles, what obviously suits **Paddy Ashdown**, the High Representative, who rejected a priori condemnations of former "combative" parties, just like **Solana** and **Patten**. (...)".

"If it is to protect Bosnian interests as the SDP was

*protecting the Bosniak ones, SDA has enough time ahead to finally transform into a civic party – but the party in an ethnically clean, Muslim state of Bosnia, at a little peace of the current BiH's territory (a bit ironic tone),” Senad Pecanin wrote in this week's **BH Dani** opening editorial.*

Asim Metiljevic wrote in this week's **Slobodna Bosna** that the most significant result of the October 5 BiH General Elections was a triumphal come back of SDA in the BiH Federation and an unexpected success of Milorad Dodik and its SNSD in the RS. According to Metiljevic, SDP, Party for BiH and its founder Haris Silajdzic are the biggest losers.

Reactions to HR-presented plan of reform

BH Radio 1 reports that RS politicians and economists are equally concerned and skeptical about the introduction of VAT at the state level. *“Judging by first reactions to a speech about economic reforms by the high representative, one can conclude that representatives of the current authorities in the RS and economic experts believe that the introduction of the single VAT at the level of state interferes with work of the inland revenues, which the entities were granted by the Dayton Agreement,”* notes the Radio. **Zarko Mionic**, assistant RS finance minister in charge of the treasury, who worked with experts in the IMF, the World Bank and the Federation on a study on the introduction of the VAT in both entities, says that the VAT at the level of BiH will have a negative impact on tax payers. *“Why? Because, for instance, I as a tax payer in the RS should pay tax in Banja Luka while this transaction should be carried out in Siroki Brijeg. I doubt that such a transaction would be carried out there.”*(**Blic** p 2, **Vecernje Novosti** p 4, **Nacional** p 11)

The SDS Spokesperson, **Dusan Stojicic**, said that Ashdown's initiative is being seriously discussed within his party. *“We are glad that the High Representative offered this package without ‘take it or leave it’ principle. Great deal of his proposals is acceptable for the SDS. Council of Ministers or BiH Government is an issue that has to be discussed. We are*

also ready to discuss the introduction of VAT. However, the fact that we are ready to talk, does not mean that we are ready to change constitutional authority of the RS.” (Glas Srpski p 5 and Nezavisne Novine p 5 quote Stojicic, Blic p 2)

The SNSD said on Thursday it would support the creation of a BiH government instead of the present Council of Ministers, if such move is in interest of both BiH entities, all three peoples and all citizens of BiH. SNSD deputy chairman **Krstan Simic** said after Wednesday’s address of High Representative **Paddy Ashdown** that there are “no more taboos” and that the interests of citizens cannot be defended by “national demagogy” but only with continuation of reforms, rule of law and employment. Simic said that Ashdown offered a program for BiH’s future, and that the new joint institutions should support everything that is in the interest of all peoples in BiH. (ONASA)

In a statement for **Dnevni Avaz** (p 3), **PDP** president **Mladen Ivanic** said that he is against the introduction of VAT at the state level. “We have already agreed on the introduction of VAT at the entity level with the IMF. As far as the transformation of the Council of Ministers is concerned, it would not be a great problem to have one president which would not rotate, so long as this institution would remain within the limits of authority it presently has.”

A high official of the PDP, **Nevenka Trifkovic**, says that the High Representative’s suggestions are acceptable for the PDP, because they pledge for them, but “we cannot accept formation of a government on the state level”. “We think that the Council of Ministers should remain, but the presidential post can be permanent, i.e. without rotation among representatives of three people, and the president of the Council should not be a bearer of a ministerial post,” Trifkovic said. (Blic p 2)

According to president of the SPRS **Petar Djokic**, the High

Representative's suggestions are part of programmes of all leading parties, because *"all have understood that poverty is ruling the country"*. *"Although we think the Council of Ministers should remain, the idea of forming a new BiH government should be discussed and if there is a will of all, then there will be a possibility to achieve a compromise,"* Djokic said. He added that the VAT was basically acceptable, but it has to be found what it will mean for the people. (Blic p 2)

In a statement for **BH Radio 1**, the Serb member of the BiH Presidency, **Zivko Radisic**, hailed High Representative's call for reform and his set of six tasks for the new authority. *"It would have been more significant and more productive had this been a result of our own wisdom and determination. However, the international community is also here with their rights and responsibilities and therefore I see in all this a continuity in the strengthening of BiH, but not at the expense of any of the peoples nor at the expense of either entity. Clearly, the newly-elected authorities will have their hands full with work. They will need courage. We need to summarize the results of the elections. I believe that the 50 per cent of citizens with the right to vote who did not turn out in the elections are personally dissatisfied with the entire situation, which means that reforms are necessary. The sooner and better we implement them and the greater the degree of consensus and agreement is achieved in the process the better it would be for all of us."*

Vecernji List (front and page 3, by Robert Bubalo) reports that main coalition partners in the new government agree with Ashdown's proposed reform of the Council of Ministers. *"We have cantonal and entity governments, and we don't have state Government, which is nonsense. (...) In this story it is extenuating circumstance that Croats and Bosniaks are thinking in the same way, both are supporting idea of forming State Government. The problem is that the Serbs are for status quo."*

We will have to convince them that Council of Ministers like this cannot function any more. (...) We have a chance to lead the country in the next four years and for the first time we have a High Representative who is objective”, said Seada Palavric, Vice President of SDA.

“It is really not normal that entities have bigger authorities than the state. BiH should get attributes of a real state, and first of all I mean extension of the Council of Ministers. Croats are equal with other two peoples only in that body and therefore we care about reforms”, stated Barisa Colak, acting President of HDZ BiH.

President of the SDA, Sulejman Tihic, told Dnevni Avaz and FTV last night that his party supports Ashdown’s set of measures aimed at strengthening the state institutions and the Council of Ministers. Tihic adds that it is necessary to create a unique customs administration at the state level. He noted, however, that Ashdown’s set of six measures is somewhat superficial and incomplete. *“All those things are already in our program, but we need to introduce some far reaching reforms.”*

The SDA said on Thursday that it fully supports the draft measures proposed by High Representative in order for the new authorities to continue the process of reforms in BiH. SDA deputy chairman Elmir Jahic told ONASA that Ashdown’s measures presented a decisive step towards strengthening of the state of BiH.

Safet Halilovic of the Party for BiH seconded this opinion. *“These measures are a step in a right direction, however, this is not enough. We have proposed a Law on BiH government a year ago and we are hoping that it will be forwarded to the parliamentary procedure. In addition, it is necessary to make the state bureaucracy more efficient and better paid and to introduce Customs Administration at the state level...and create a single army at the state level.”*

Federation Customs Administration chief Zelimir Rebac said he fully supports Ashdown's plan of fast reforms, in particular measures pertaining to customs policy. *"This state ought to have Customs Administration at the state level. There is no country in the world with two customs administration units...This unification would redirect some 300 million KM per year to the Federation budget, which is how much we lose now because of the lax inter-entity cooperation."*

Aida Feraget, the spokesperson for **Coca-Cola** company in BiH, said that this company is encouraged by the decisiveness to put the economic issues in the forefront of discussion. Representative of **Unilever** in BiH, Sead Basic, seconded this view.

"The High Representative has called upon political parties which will form authority to develop constructive proposals in order to implement the six measures. For the International Community, this will be a test of sorts for their (parties') readiness to tackle reforms and come up with ideas for their implementation...Parties are entitled to reject some of those. However, the International Community will judge them on their readiness to implement reforms and on the level of their constructive engagement in terms of coming up with new ideas for their implementation," OHR chief spokesperson **Julian Braithwaite** told **Dnevni Avaz**.

In an editorial in **Dnevni Avaz**, Sead Numanovic notes that it is sad that local authorities and economists are showing so little initiative in terms of proposing economic reforms and leave the entire business to the International community. In addition, Numanovic argues, instead of working urgently on the implementation of these reforms, officials are wasting their time discussing and criticizing them. *"Ashdown's program needs to be understood as a call and encouragement to numerous NGOs to get involved in the process of reform and of improving the general wellbeing of the people. Mere criticizing will not have a great deal of use."*

Vecernji List (page 2, by Milo Jukic) carries that *'immediately after **Paddy Ashdown**, the High Representative, put on table results of the last elections, he gave homework for new authority representatives.'* Jukic criticizes the fact that this homework does not mention at all national and political problems. The editorial says that *'the situation is very simple: without resolving of the political issues, and the national ones as a part of them, it is in vain to deal with customs, taxes, courts etc.'* The editorial concludes: *'As long as all people pretend that the political and national problems do not exist BiH will be a festering boil on the body of Europe.'*

SIPA appointments

In a collective interview with **Dnevni Avaz** (p. 5), members of the BiH Presidency, **Beriz Belkic**, **Zivko Radisic** and **Jozo Krizanovic**, agreed that they regret that the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, had to issue a decision appointing the heads of State Information and Protection Agency (**SIPA**). *"This was the one and only time that the High Representative had to do a job for us. I personally saw this as a defeat of the Presidency,"* said Krizanovic.

Vecernji List (page 2, by D. Jazvic) and **Slobodna Dalmacija** (page 15) carry that members of the **BiH Presidency** talked on Thursday with representatives of the BiH Agency for Information and Protection (**SIPA**). The members of the BiH Presidency referred to a need to internally organize this Agency and to create basic material and financial preconditions for its work as soon as possible and with full cooperation of the BiH Council of Ministers, OHR and UN Mission.

During last night's DILEME show at **FTV**, the most likely members of the future BiH Presidency, **Mirko Sarovic**, **Dragan Covic** and **Sulejman Tihic**, strongly criticized the move of the High Representative to appoint the SIPA heads before the new authorities are constituted. The three officials agreed that

it is not a job of the High Representative to resolve personnel issues. *"I believe that Ashdown has made a precedent with this decision. Under Annex 10, High Representative has powers to dismiss, but not to name officials. I will consider his decision to be of a temporary nature,"* said Tihic. Sarovic seconded this view, adding that it is *"a bit unusual to make such a decision at the time when the mandate of the current presidency is coming to an end. I think that he simply discredited the elected bodies of authority with this decision."* Tihic and Sarovic did not want to openly say whether they will challenge this decision of the High Representative, but noted that it is *"more natural and in line with the BiH Constitution that such personnel issues are resolved by the Presidency."* *"We will discuss this when the new Presidency is constituted."*

This week's **BH Dani** awarded on Bosnian Barometer pages the High Representative, **Paddy Ashdown**, with one star (good move) for his decision to appoint **SIPA** heads. However, in the same issue, the magazine declared Ashdown the Person in Focus criticizing him for insulting remarks on the address of some prominent BiH journalists including Oslobodjenje's **Gojko Beric** he had made in the FTV 60 Minutes program.

Terrorism/organized crime

Oslobodjenje (front page) reports that the US State Prosecutor John Ashcroft announced yesterday that investigators have found a text of pledge to **Al Qaida** in the premises of the Benevolence International Fund in BiH. *"These documents will constitute an important evidence in the case against Enam Arnaout, the BIF director, who was arrested early this year in Sarajevo,"* he explained.

Vecernji List (page 15) quotes the Head of British Foreign Office's Department for East Adriatic, **Stephen Wordsworth**, as saying that the London Conference is to take place in London on November 25. Asked whether the conference would be some sort of a new "Balkans summit", as speculated in the media,

Wordsworth said that he was very surprised with media reports. *"I do not know who launched them (allegations), but this conference is specifically focused on problems of organized crime. Conference was conceived a few months ago, before the elections in BiH. It will not be a political gathering, nothing like Dayton. It will have a strong political signal but the concrete level too",* says Wordsworth.

Electronic Media Headlines

BHTV 1

- Votes in absence and through the mail give different picture of the structure of the state Presidency
- High Representative – Priority of authority is transformation of the Council of Ministers into the state authority
- BiH Ambassador in FRY announced his resignation
- Elections silence starts in midnight in the eve of the second round of elections in Serbia

FTV – no report

RTRS

- BiH Court Headquarter in former Viktor Bubanj military barracks – Council of Ministers decided
- Spiric – Council of Ministers' decision is the biggest humiliation of Serb people since Dayton Agreement
- Pre-election silence starts on midnight in Serbia
- US – new indictments against Al-Qaeda members